

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 212 366

PS 012 628

AUTHOR Bossing, Lewis; Sasseen, Beverly
TITLE Building Positive Self-Concepts in Fourth Grade Students.
PUB DATE [80]
NOTE 18p.
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Classroom Techniques; *Elementary School Students; Grade 4; Intermediate Grades; Low Achievement; Pretests Posttests; *Psychoeducational Methods; *Self Concept; *Self Esteem; *Teacher Influence

ABSTRACT

Sixteen Caucasian, fourth-grade, low ability math students participated in an experimental classroom intervention designed to improve their self-concepts. After pretesting with the How I See Myself Scale (HISMS), students each day for 8 weeks began class with a self-enhancing activity. Specific classroom exercises aimed at increasing children's self-esteem were integrated during math class. While the students were working on a lesson, the teacher circulated through the classroom giving praise and recognition. Other strategies employed to raise student self-esteem included student tutoring, giving special privileges to a chosen "Student of the Week," distributing special seals and stickers, reading statements placed in a "Complaint Box," and the construction of a "Happiness Book" with each child's name in it. In addition, the Developing Understanding of Self and Others (DUSO) D-2 Kit was used for building better self-concepts. Comparison of student's pre- and posttest responses on the HISMS indicated that, when a mean response level of 50 per cent was taken as neutral, on 14 items fourth graders demonstrated a lower self-concept; on one item they remained the same; and on 25 items they demonstrated a higher self-concept. As a result of the classroom intervention, the attitude of the students seemed to improve in the areas of teacher-student relationships and academic ability. (Author/RH)

* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *

ED212366

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as
received from the person or organization
originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve
reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this docu-
ment do not necessarily represent official NIE
position or policy.

BUILDING POSITIVE SELF-CONCEPTS
IN FOURTH GRADE STUDENTS

Dr. Lewis Bossing
Murray State University

Ms. Beverly Sasseen
McCracken County School District

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS
MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Lewis Bossing

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

PS 01 2628

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Review of Literature	2
Method	10
Subjects	10
Instrument	10
Procedure	10
Results.	11
Conclusions and Recommendations	12
References	14

Building Positive Self-Concepts

In Fourth Grade Students

Introduction

Building positive self-concepts is a very important goal in the eyes of the educators. "Educate the whole child," has been stated many times by educators. American education has had four goals: (1) academic, (2) vocational, (3) social, and (4) personal, which includes self-concept development.

Throughout history some goals have received precedence over others. The pendulum of education swung from academic goals in the early 1900's to social goals in the 1930's and back to an academic focus in the '60's. Then the humanistic movement emphasized personal and social goals. The current trend is back-to-the-basics and competency testing. Current budget restrictions in education are certain to affect curricular goals.

Teachers will continue to be concerned with intellectual development of their students but must also remain cognizant of the importance of social/emotional development. What does an elementary school teacher do with low ability grouped students who exhibit signs of poor self-concept? What results when specifically designed self-concept strategies and activities are made an integral part of the curriculum?

The problem to be investigated in this study is to assess student self-concept, identify strategies and implement activities which promote building self-concepts of low ability fourth grade math students.

Review of Literature

Teachers have sensed the significant and positive relationship between a student's concept of himself and his school performance. Schooling affects children's self-concept differently. For some children the effects are in a positive direction; for others the effects are negative. Higher achievement is accompanied by higher self-concept and low achievement by low self-concept. It has been observed that general student self-concept becomes more negative through the school years. (Hamachek, 1971).

Certain school characteristics affect student self-concept. Teachers' self-image, characteristics, their interaction with students and their teaching style all relate to student self-concept. Many areas, such as grouping patterns, mainstreaming, various classroom settings and non-promotion practices, remain unclear as to how they are related to student self-concept. Additional research is needed before the impact can be fully understood.

Teachers can assess students' self-concept through two methods: observation and self-reporting. An attempt is made to acquire an objective picture of the student and his behavior through observations. What should be included in observing students? Purkey (1970) states the following:

In observing a person we usually begin with his appearance. We can become aware of the clothes he wears and the way he wears them. We can consider his height and weight, his posture, his grooming, and his general cleanliness. We can take note of any physical problems and his apparent state of health. Next we can take into account his behavior--his speech, his movements, his facial expressions, his manners, his habits, and his reactions. We can be particularly

alert to fleeting clues which tell us how he relates to his peer group and to adults, taking into account the things he seeks out and the things he avoids, the way he reacts to success and to failure, to approval and to disapproval, and the way he spends his spare time. From all these observations we gather the raw material which we may use to draw inferences.

Teachers should look for reasons for behavior rather than behavior itself. Teachers develop sensitivity through observations. The following six questions from Washington (1974) serve as a guide for observations:

1. Does the learner make his own decisions (self-directed)?
2. Does the learner feel secure with himself?
3. Does the child have a positive attitude toward learning?
4. Does the child accept himself (race, ethnic)?
5. Is the learner able to deal with his inner conflicts?
6. Does the learner exhibit goal-oriented behavior?

The Florida Key is a learner self-concept scale designed to assist teachers in evaluating a student's perception of himself as a learner. The scale assesses four dimensions: (1) relating, (2) investing, (3) asserting, and (4) coping. Through observation and inference teachers rate the student on each question along a continuum from "never" to "very often". The rating is determined by asking Purkey's (1973) questions:

Compared with other students of the same age, does this student:

1. get along with other students?
2. get along with the teacher?
3. keep calm when things go wrong?
4. say good things about his/her school?
5. tell the truth about his/her work?

6. speak up for his/her own ideas?
7. offer to speak in front of the class?
8. offer to answer questions in class?
9. ask meaningful questions in class?
10. exhibit confidence in his/her school work?
11. persist in his/her school endeavors?
12. talk to others about his/her school work?
13. join in school activities?
14. seek out new things to do in school on his/her own?
15. offer to do extracurricular work in school?
16. spend time helping others?
17. show an interest in others' work?
18. show interest in being a leader?
19. initiate school projects?
20. finish his/her school work?
21. pay attention to class activities?
22. do his/her work carefully?
23. talk to teachers about personal concerns?

Checklists and scales provide a systematic method of collecting data. Anecdotal records, diaries and analyses of student autobiographies are other observation techniques.

A second method of diagnosing self-concept is by means of a self-reporting instrument. Self-reports have weaknesses and limitations, but do reveal characteristics of the self and are important to teachers. They give rich insights into how the child views himself and his world. A brief description of the better known self-report inventories for the fourth grade follows:

1. Self-Esteem Inventory

The SEI was developed by Stanley Coopersmith of the University of California. The 58-item scale was designed to measure general self, social self-peer, home-parents, and school-academic self, in addition with self esteem. All the statements have been worded to use with children eight to ten years old.

(Purkey, 1970).

2. Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale

This 80-item instrument measures general self-concept. The descriptive statements are designed to measure ten self-concept dimensions. The scale is appropriate for use in grades three or above. (Purkey, 1970).

3. The Bledsoe Self-Concept Scale

The BSCS was designed by Joseph Bledsoe of the University of Georgia and consists of thirty trait descriptive adjectives. It has been used successfully with third through eighth graders. (Bledsoe, 1967).

4. How I See Myself Scale

The HISM was developed by Ira Gordon of Florida from 1958 to 1967. It was devised from categories developed by Jersild, out of the compositions of children. The scale consists of a 40-item (elementary form) five-point scale. Items were developed for use with children ages three to twelve years. This popular instrument measures five self-concept dimensions: physical appearance, interpersonal, teacher-student, academic ability and autonomy. (Gordon, 1968).

Purkey (1970) stated four rules for giving self-report scales:

1. Read items to young students or ones with reading difficulties.
2. Stress that there are not right or wrong answers.
3. Administer the scale in a non-threatening manner.
4. Maintain confidentiality of the results.

After assessing students' self-concepts it is important to remediate any negative ones and enhance positive ones. One way to plan for desired change is to develop a checklist of questions for periodic reference. A checklist might include a series of questions like the following from Randolph (1968):

Do I encourage students to express their opinions and ideas?

Do I convey to students my concern and interest for their needs?

Do I exhibit a "business-like and systematic" approach to the learning task?

Do I interject humor into the classroom?

Do I make a concerted effort to interact with all of my students?

Do I encourage my students to praise their peers?

Do I set realistic and challenging expectations for my students?

Regarding strategies, the researchers have found a direct relationship between achievement and self-concept. The most recent research in this area has resulted in additional evidence supporting the claim that improvements in achievement will lead to more positive self-concepts. Considerable attention has been directed to the identification of teaching variables and strategies that will increase academic achievement. Several variables found to be effective are; (1) use of praise, (2) use of pupil ideas, (3) frequent questioning, (4) review of exercises, (5) clear presentations and questions, (6) teacher enthusiasm, (7) increased time on task, and (8) direct instruction. (Silvernail, 1979).

Canfield (1976) states several principles about what can be done about

students' self-concepts.

1. It is possible to change self-concepts, and it is possible for teachers to affect the changes--either way, both positive and negative.
2. It isn't easy. Change takes place slowly, over a long period of time.
3. Efforts that aim at more central beliefs have greater impact on the student even though they are harder to change.
4. Peripheral experiences are helpful.
5. Relating successes or strengths to one another is important.

Creating an environment of mutual support and caring optimizes growth. Students must trust other group members and the teacher to the extent that they can express their feelings openly without ridicule. Without the critical environmental dimensions of trust, caring and openness, the teacher's efforts to enhance pupils' sense of self-esteem will be seriously limited.

Canfield and Wells (1976) list four elements of a supportive classroom climate as:

1. Accepting pupil contributions without judgement
2. Maintaining a "you can do it" attitude
3. Listening, listening, listening
4. Being, in all ways, a friend

Implementing activities which promote building positive self-concepts are great motivators for the low ability child. Children enjoy receiving positive reinforcement forms, statements and certificates which they can show mom and dad. Many of these have a place for the child's name. Some of these awards give students extra privileges and leader-

ship opportunities. Positively phrased stickers are great for enhancing the child's self-concept.

Canfield and Wells (1976) list endless ways to enhance self-concept in the classroom. The researchers have found these to be very beneficial. Some ongoing activities are; Student of the Week, Happiness Book and the Compliment box.

Tutoring programs in which students tutor other students are a strategy for improving achievement and self-concept.

Self expression through puppetry and dance is believed to improve a child's self-concept. This type of participation enables the student to gain greater self-confidence in his abilities.

Several commercially effective education programs have been produced for use in the classroom. The Human Development Program of Magic Circle was developed by Bassell and Palomares. It is designed to improve student interpersonal communications. The objectives of this program are to help children to; understand the similarities and differences between themselves and others, identify and use their own abilities, and to recognize their role in social relationships.

Dinkmeyer's Developing Understanding of Self and Others (DUSO) is often used in kindergarten classes. It helps children understand the consequences of their behavior and teach self-acceptance, decision-making, and social responsibility. Materials such as storybooks, records, puppetry materials, and role-playing cards are included in the program. These activities are to help the child become more aware of the relationships between himself, other people, and his needs and goals. DUSO was reported to be effective in improving the self-concepts of fourth graders as compared with younger children.

Limbacher's Dimensions of Personality (DOP) is another program designed to help students understand their motives and emotions. The curriculum materials are designed to promote confidence, competence, cooperation, self-awareness, self-understanding and self-acceptance. Student activities include reading passages and group discussions.

Group counseling is a strategy which helps students to explore their thoughts and emotions and thereby develop more realistic self-images. Sessions are centered around student concerns and interests.

Some educators are developing a parent-teacher partnership. This partnership is to lead to improved student self-concept. Any positive gains by the student are to be rewarded with commendatory remarks and support. (Silvernail, 1979).

In reviewing the current literature one can find that by improving the academic achievement levels of students self-concepts will probably be improved. By creating learner-supportive environments and accepting behavior linked with the learning task, positive gains can be expected. If properly used, many strategies appear to hold great potential for enhancing self-concept. This review of literature also indicates that a program of self-enhancing strategies and activities for elementary school students should contain provisions for:

1. An atmosphere of relaxed acceptance of each student.
2. An environment which encourages students to reach levels of high expectations.
3. A careful assessment of students' self-concepts.
4. The use of a variety of self-enhancing strategies and activities.
5. A means of self-evaluation to help students identify behaviors they desire to change.

Method

Subjects

Subjects were sixteen caucasian fourth grade low ability math students from Reidland Kentucky Elementary School. There were ten male and six female students whose mean age was 10.0 years. The mean I.Q. (first grade group test) was 101. The highest third grade score on the CTBS test was 3.6, while the lowest was 2.8. Two of the subjects had been mainstreamed into the classroom and two had been identified as learning disabled students.

Instrument

The students were given a pre-test at the beginning of the experimental eight weeks. At the close of the period, a post-test was given. The instrument selected was the How I See Myself Scale. The elementary form consists of a forty-item five-point scale. The scale was chosen because it is a widely used instrument which measures five self-concept dimensions; physical appearance, interpersonal, teacher-student, academic ability and autonomy.

Procedure

The fourth grade low math class was instructed for a period of eight weeks using a plan of instruction which included pre-testing, assessment of student self-concepts, and self-enhancing strategies and activities.

All subjects completed the How I See Myself Scale. Before specific instructions were given children were instructed that there were no right or wrong answers and that no one else would see their papers. Each child was provided with a copy of the scale and all items were orally presented in order to avoid bias due to reading ability.

Each day began with a self-enhancing activity. Specific classroom exercises aimed at increasing children's self-esteem were integrated during math class. While the students were working the lesson, the teacher circulated the room giving added praise and recognition. Eliciting student contributions, integrating them into discussion and praising the noteworthy ones became useful techniques that correlated positively with self-esteem. Student tutoring was another strategy used.

The researchers used other strategies such as:

A checklist which included a series of questions--for periodic reference.

Student of the Week was chosen. He received special privileges, plus a bulletin board area to display his own "special things".

Positive reinforcement forms, statements and certificates were sent home to parents.

Special seals and stickers were given.

Each child wrote an autobiography.

A Compliment box was placed in the room. The statements were read aloud at the end of each week.

A Happiness Book was made with each child's name in it. Happy thoughts were written about each child.

The DUSO-D-2 kit was used for building better self-concepts. This kit contains puppets, tapes, charts and card activities. DUSO's extensive use of an inquiry and discussion approach to learning is reflected in a variety of activities. These activities are role-playing, puppetry, group discussion, supplementary activities, reading suggestions, music and art.

Results

The group varied in its response to the experimental study. Fourteen responses demonstrated a lower self-concept, one response remained the same, while twenty-five responses demonstrated a higher self-concept.

The results of the comparison between the pre-test and the post-test score showed most students making positive changes. (Table 1) The attitude of the students seemed to improve in teacher-student relations and in academic ability.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This research indicates that self-enhancing strategies of self-concept should be continued and expanded during the year as the students reveal important characteristics of their personality. The instructional program should be subjected to continuous evaluation and revision in order to gain insight into how the child sees himself and his world. It is evident that concerted efforts to enhance student self-concept often result in positive changes. Improvement in a student's self-concept will generally be accompanied by increased achievement.

The researchers believe that additional study should be done at the end of the school year to further determine the validity of the study. Using the results of this comparison, further conclusions could be drawn regarding the effectiveness of the self-enhancing activities and the self-report inventory. Further research is needed to identify effective change strategies.

TABLE I
Comparison of Pre-Test Scores With Post-Test Scores
On HISM Scale

Question Numbers	Percent of Student Response		
	Pre-Test	Post-Test	Difference
1	58.0 %	65.0 %	+ 07.0 %
2	87.5	82.5	- 05.0
3	52.5	61.3	+ 08.8
4	90.0	81.3	- 08.7
5	62.5	75.0	+ 12.5
6	81.3	67.5	- 13.8
7	83.8	70.0	- 13.8
8	22.5	35.0	+ 12.5
9	22.5	33.8	+ 11.3
10	81.3	83.8	+ 02.5
11	43.8	52.5	+ 08.7
12	67.5	53.8	- 13.7
13	38.8	63.8	+ 25.0
14	53.8	52.5	- 01.3
15	40.0	48.8	+ 08.8
16	26.3	27.5	+ 01.2
17	81.3	80.0	- 01.3
18	76.3	65.0	- 11.3
19	75.0	87.5	+ 12.5
20	52.5	66.3	+ 13.8
21	36.3	38.8	+ 02.5
22	31.3	36.3	+ 05.0
23	83.8	73.8	- 10.0
24	77.5	85.0	+ 07.5
25	27.5	38.8	+ 11.3
26	51.3	53.8	+ 02.5
27	43.8	55.0	+ 11.2
28	42.5	53.8	+ 11.3
29	25.0	35.0	+ 10.0
30	68.8	70.0	+ 01.2
31	96.3	80.0	- 16.3
32	58.8	66.3	+ 07.5
33	85.0	76.3	- 08.7
34	66.3	56.3	- 10.0
35	42.5	52.5	+ 10.0
36	88.8	88.8	= 00.0
37	55.0	43.8	- 11.2
38	77.5	86.3	+ 08.8
39	82.5	58.8	- 23.7
40	86.3	87.5	+ 01.2

References

- Bledsoe, J. "Self-Concept of Children and Their Intelligence, Achievement, Interests, and Anxiety. Childhood Education. 43: 436-38. 1967.
- Brophy, Jere E. Advances in Teacher Effectiveness Research. East Lansing: Institute for Research on Teaching, Michigan State University, Nov., 1978.
- Calsyn, Robert J., Quicke, Jan and Harris, Sharon. "Do Improved Communication Skills Lead to Increased Self-Esteem?". Elementary School Guidance and Counseling. Oct., 1980.
- Canfield, Jack and Wells, Harold C. One Hundred Ways to Enhance Self-Concept in the Classroom: A Handbook for Teachers and Parents. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1976.
- Ellsworth, Sterling G. "Building the Self-Concept," Today's Education. LXI, No. 2, 54-56, Feb., 1974.
- Felker, D.W. Building Positive Self-Concepts. Minneapolis, Minn.: Burgess Publishing Co., 1974.
- Flegg, J. "Schools Maximize Individual Differences," Communication Quarterly, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Mich., Vol. 3, No. 3, Spring, 1980.
- Fleming, Elyse and Attonen, Ralph G., "Teacher Expectancy as Related to the Academic and Personal Growth of Primary-Age Children". Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development. Vol. 36 (5) 32p., Dec., 1971.
- Hamachek, Don E. Encounter With the Self. Chicago, Ill.: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1971.
- Kash, M.M. and Borich, G.D. Teacher Behavior and Teacher Self-Concept. Reading, Mass.: Addison Wesley Publishing Co., 1978.
- Lewter, B.L. "Toward Changing Self-Concept in the Classroom: The Effect of Interpersonal Competence Skill Enhancement," Education, Psychology. 1979.
- Purkey, Willaim W. Inviting School Success: A Self-Concept Approach to Teaching and Learning. Belmont, Cal.: Wadsworth Publishing, Inc., 1978.

- _____. Self-Concept and School Achievement. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1970.
- Purkey, William W., Cage, Bob and Graves, William. "The Florida Key: A Scale to Infer Learner Self-Concept". Educational and Psychological Measurement, 33: 979-984, 1973.
- Randolf, Norma, Howe, William and Achterman, Elizabeth. Self Enhancing Education Communication Techniques and Processes That Enhance: A Training Manual. Menlo Park, Cal.: A PACE Project, Title III ESEA, 1968.
- Reynolds, William M. "Self-Esteem and Classroom Behavior in Elementary School Children". Psychology in the Schools. Vol. 17, No. 2, April, 1980.
- Silvernail, D.L. Teaching Styles as Related to Student Achievement. Washington D.C.: National Education Association, 1979.
- Stewart, D.J., Crump, D.W. and McLean, J.E. "Response Instability on the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale". Journal of Learning Disability. 12: 351-355. May, 1979.
- Survant, A. "Building Positive Self-Concepts". Instructor. 81: 94-95, 1972.
- Washington, K.R. "Self-Concept Development: An Effective Educational Experience for Inner-City Teachers". Young Children. 19: 305-10, 1974.
- White, K. and Howard, J.L. "Failure to Be Promoted and Self-Concept Among Elementary School Children". Elementary School Guidance and Counseling. 7: 182-87, 1973.
- Williams, R.L. and Cole, S. "Self-Concept and School Adjustment". Personnel and Guidance Journal. 46: 478-81, 1968.